



Belltown Neighborhood Notes

September 20, 2002
11:00 am to 12:30 pm
2:30 pm to 4:00 pm

Susan Jurasz, Peter Reedijk, and Catherine McCoy

We walked from the Olympus (2801 Western) to Elliott Ave, Elliott Ave to Western Ave (northwest) and then back down Elliott Ave to Western (southeast), circled the Lenora and Virginia block and came back on Western Ave (northwest). At Denny, we walked up two blocks, so that we would be walking with traffic flow, and walked down 2nd Avenue going toward city center (southeast). At Stewart we walked toward the water (west) and came back on 1st Ave. We ended our tour at Denny. It took three hours and three people to document half of Belltown.

October 1, 2002
12:30 pm to 3:15 pm

Peter Reedijk, Susan Jurasz, and Catherine McCoy

We walked back and forth on the numbered streets beginning from where we had left off (First half we walked Elliot, Western, 1st, and 2nd.) Today, we walked 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th. Beginning from the Olympus (2801 Western) we walked up to Broad and 3rd. We walked 3rd toward Denny and then turned back to walk the length of 3rd (within the neighborhood) toward commercial core to Stewart and continued back on 4th. At Denny we turned went up to 5th and walked under the monorail to Virginia. Then to 6th. We walked 6th to Denny and finished the neighborhood.

Summary

Belltown feels like a residential neighborhood. While there are shops and restaurants along 1st Avenue, the area is predominately apartment buildings—most of them new or recently remodeled. The neighborhood feels inviting and appears to offer safe, relatively upscale places to live. There is a sense of community.

As the Belltown perimeter nears the border with Commercial Core (Virginia and Stewart) the “sense of place” changes significantly and the buildings, businesses, and street front appears older, dirtier, and less inviting. The feeling is that this area is a no-man’s land. A border between neighborhoods (which ironically it is). This is also the case along 6th Avenue.

Overall Belltown is surprisingly well marked. There are at least thirty businesses that use Belltown or Bell in their name and banners identifying Belltown are well-distributed throughout the entire neighborhood. There are some interesting thematic elements such as custom lamp posts and artsy concrete benches, but these are only useful as identifiers to pedestrians and may not actually be noticed unless someone is either actively looking at local architecture or walked in the Belltown on a regular basis.

Observations

Elliott Ave

At the northwest end of Elliott, there is the PI Globe—a prominent landmark. Elliott is a primary connector to Industrial area where Elliott merges with Western. This end of Belltown borders Uptown (signs point to Queen Anne) and Seattle Center. We did not see any Seattle Center directionals, but the space needle is clearly visible.

There is a vehicular “gateway” to the waterfront from Elliott at Broad Street. It is marked with green highway signage (WSDOT).

At the southeast end of Elliott the avenue angles away from the waterfront and runs under state route 99. There is an entrance onto SR 99 just before Elliott connects with Western Ave and Pike Place near Pike Place Market.

Along Elliott, the prominent businesses include: Real Networks, International Conference Center, Seattle Art Institute, and Microsoft.

Elliott Avenue appears to be an important vehicular thoroughfare. Vehicles travel fast and there are two lanes of traffic traveling each direction (four lanes). There are, however, also some important pedestrian connections to the waterfront.

At Bell Street (and Elliott), a large pedestrian overpass (The Bell Street Bridge) leads to the cruise ship docking facility. Here there is an elevator and a stairway down onto the waterfront (Alaskan Way). This overpass is a “Gateway” in to the Waterfront area and the entrance of the bridge is clearly identified with four columns and two interpretive kiosks (with maps) matching the Waterfront Wayfinding system.

Wayfinding notes:

The boundary of Belltown neighborhood identifies the



waterfront as part of Belltown. Yet it is also obvious that the Waterfront is a destination that stands alone. The Bell Street Bridge “gateway” creates an interesting dilemma the area is signed with the Waterfont signage system, however, Belltown also has a strong historical presence along this stretch of waterfront. Pier 66 is called Bell Street Pier and it is clearly labeled. There is also the Bell Harbor International Conference Center, Bell Street Dinner (Anthony’s), Bell Street Deli—all business that reflect Belltown. The interpretive kiosks here present some of the history of Belltown area.

There is another pedestrian link to the Waterfront at Lenora Street. This link enters under State Route 99 and is less visible from the Elliott than Bell Street. (It may be more visible on the Waterfront along Alaskan Way) This pedestrian connector it is marked with Waterfront signage similar to the Bell Street Bridge connection (two columns) (did not photograph).

As you continue up Elliott Avenue on to Western Ave, you see Belltown Banners for the first time. To the right (toward the Market) along Western (between Lenora and Virginia) there are Belltown Banners and West Edge Plaques on the same light poles (one on top of the other)—implying a border dispute.

There is a vehicular “gateway” to the waterfront from Elliott at Broad Street. It is marked with green highway signage (WSDOT).

Western Ave

(walking with direction of traffic toward Seattle Center – 4 lanes) There were banners along Western Avenue. The Belltown banners are green, yellow, and blue. (They say Belltown and advertise belltown.com, which we checked out – the web site has a history of belltown and plans for development including a movie depicting the P-patch garden area undergoing some significant enhancements.) Western is predominately “secondary businesses” (need a purpose to go there). Cort (rental) Furniture, Art Supplies, etc and residential—apartment and condos are the primary tenants. At the northwest end, several new, large, luxury apartment complexes are under construction.

Western Ave also has a Latino day-worker “pick-up” area (between Battery and Bell), so the sidewalks are often full of people waiting. There are also some “hang-outs,” such as near the Million Dollar Club.

Wayfinding notes:

At the northeast end of Western (as it crosses Denny) there is a directional to Queen Anne.

1st Ave

(walking with direction of two-way traffic toward Seattle Center – 4 lanes) First Avenue feels is visitor’s destination in this community. The street on both sides is lined with intimate restaurants and patrons enjoying themselves—some even at tables outside along the sidewalk. There is a festive atmosphere. The shopping ranges from moderately expensive brand names like the Gilbert Shoes and Patagonia to funky clothing shops. Designer furniture and accessory stores provide some interesting great window shopping.

Also along First Ave are some interesting concrete benches. There are at least a half dozen unusually shaped, whimsical benches on both sides along the avenue. These benches appear to be thematic to this neighborhood.

Wayfinding notes:

Belltown banners were well displaced on both sides of the road and there were many business and building names that reinforced the Belltown identity.

2nd Ave

(walking toward commercial core – two way traffic) An island covered in trees, shrubs and blooming flowers in the middle of Second Ave (as you enter from Denny Way) suggests that this area is a “green street.” The sidewalks here are wide and inviting.

Wayfinding notes:

Thematic light fixtures (some with Belltown signs) are featured all along Second Ave—on both sides. Unfortunately due to the trees, these fixtures are often not visible, and the inspiration for design is unclear. (We assumed that the theme related to the history of Belltown, but even after researching the Belltown web site, and reading the interpretive panels on the Bell Street Bridge, we could not figure out what the design for these elements symbolize)

As part of this “thematic” design, there are also some areas along the sidewalk which display reddish pavement inserts. These areas have the texture and shape of logs. We assumed that there must be a logging or timber significance to Belltown. (True for most Pacific Northwest communities.) We also found one unusual bench, that also appeared to be part of this construction theme. None of these elements, other than the

signs that actually say “Belltown” are clear as identifiers for the community.

3rd Ave

(walking toward commercial core – two way traffic)
Third Avenue has some a series of thematic elements that are only found along this street. Some of the elements contain street lights, some are signs that say Belltown and some contain clocks.

4th Ave

(walking with direction of one-way traffic toward Seattle Center – 4 lanes) This is an arterial leaving the downtown area. It well marked with banners. Mostly residential with some nice resturants. The lights along here are thematic—they stand out as unique to this street.

5th Ave

(walking toward commercial core – one way traffic, 3 lanes + monorail) The monorail track is elevated and runs down the center of Fifth Ave. This does not seem to affect the vehicular or pedestrian traffic along this street. In fact, there are a surprising number of motels along the northwest side of Fifth Ave.

6th Ave

(walking with direction of one-way traffic toward Seattle Center – 4 lanes) Sixth Avenue is clearly a boundary. It is fairly non-descript. It feels like a transition zone, there are no banners or Belltown identifiers.





3 denney/broad (2)



4 elliot/broad



5 fifth/denny



7 first/stewart



8 fourth/denny



9 fourth/stewart



10 third/denny



11 third/stewart



12 western/denny



13 first/denny



13b first/denny



14 elliott/western



14b elliot/western



15 looking up western



16 blanchard/elliott/15



17 western/lenora



18 western/battery



19 sixth/bell



20 sixth/wall

x.x



1.53



1.56



1.67



1.17



1.34



1.36



1.37



1.38



1.42



1.43



1.44



1.45



1.54



1.66



1.68



1.76



1.77



1.87



1.98



1.103



1.104



1.105



1.110



1.111



1.112



1.121



1.122



1.123



1.127



1.128



1.130



1.131



1.133



1.134



1.136



2.19



2.20



2.22



2.24



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1.101



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1.111



1.112



1.124



1.125



1.129



1.132



1.137



1.138



2.25



2.26



2.87



1.25



1.88



1.89



1.90



1.99



1.106



1.107



1.108



1.109



1.113



1.117-1.120



1.141



2.18



2.23



2.28



2.29



2.32



2.39



2.47



2.50



2.51



2.53



2.67



2.69



2.70



2.71



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2.83



2.84



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1.40



1.41



1.48



1.49



1.65



1.69



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2.45



2.54



2.55



2.72



1.11



1.12



1.13



1.14



1.15



1.16



2.05



2.17



3.1



3.2



3.2b



3.3



3.4



3.5



3.6



3.9



3.10



3.11



3.12



3.13



3.14



3.15



3.16



3.17



3.18



3.20



3.22



3.24



3.25 same type of sign as 3.2



4.144